1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

000 42°. But he feels the cold, and at night, when walking, may be met
513 carrying a glowing ember held close to his navel for warmth, while
374 in camp he sleeps on the ground between two fires, and in house, field-hut or village dormitory sleeps generally on a platform of criss-crossed bamboos or creeper rope with a fire beneath it. He
513 has usually also a sleeping mat or *maini* (Halbi) made of a special grass, which is easily rolled up and carried about when he visits Jagdalpur or a touring officer's camp; or he may use instead of it his *taghali* or bark rain coat. He sleeps generally on his side with his head resting on his arm, the other arm resting on the ground in front with the elbow bent; and he will shift from side to side. It is *polo*, that is taboo, for a woman to sleep on a cot or platform, and she must sleep on the ground in her room in the house.

Bodily attitudes

The Bison-horn Maria has generally a cot to sleep on, and even his wife often has one. In such matters he is getting more and more like the ordinary Hindu villager.

516 For eating or social conversation or resting, the Hill Maria often sits with his buttocks on the ground and his knees drawn up, though he sometimes uses the familiar Indian squatting position, and his women usually squat in this way for mourning at funerals or singing at weddings. The men have also little wooden stools to [352] sit on, or sit on a stone, as at the commensal feasts; while in the villages where there is the custom of the *gaita* or headman and the *kasyeq-gaita* or Village Mother priest sitting on an *uddamgarya* or seat of honour to preside over meetings of the elders, it is often a flat stone resting on stone legs, on which he sits in ordinary sitting posture. In any group of Hill Marias resting after a meal or on a march you will see almost every attitude that might be adopted by English schoolboys except lying prone on back or stomach. If standing, a favourite position of all the tribes in Bastar is to stand on one foot, the other knee being bent so that the sole of the foot may rest against the outer side of the standing leg, the arm on the same side as the bent knee catching hold of a bough or something for steadiness. Another favourite position is to stand with the left leg braced, the right slightly flexed so that the left hip is extended sideways; the left wrist or knuckles rest on this hip, while the right hand rests on the left shoulder, the right arm being bent at the elbow to look like a V over the chest; or else the right arm is hung loosely at the side, or held in that of the next youth. For fire-making, they kneel on their knees. They stand to urinate and squat to defecate.

[372]

[514] The Bison-horn Maria uses mostly the same positions, but is more prone to imitate Hindu habits; he squats to urinate.*

*[See cat. 116, p. 418. - Analyst]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

Bhainsā-andhyār (Ha.)		'Buffalo-darkness', when the evening has become as dark as a buffalo's hide.
Tindā-tindānā (G.) / *Bhāt-kurā* (Ha.)		9.30 p.m., the time of eating (*tindānā*) the supper of boiled rice (*bhāt*).
Bhāt-ulad-kurā (Ha.)	..	The time when drowsiness (*nīnd*) comes over one after supper.
Narjāt (G.)	..	Midnight. The Hill Marias say *narjūm*.

The routine of the Bison-horn family's day is roughly as follows. The woman rises at cock-crow, and arranges her hair, but does not wash. She then pounds grain with the *usṭal* husker. Her husband gets up when it is time to yoke the bullocks, and goes off to plough. She then sweeps out the house and its surroundings, and goes to the river to fetch water, and on her return cooks the *ṭej* gruel for her husband's meal; any spare time is occupied in basket-making. He generally comes home for this meal, but when the field-work is heavy, she takes it to him there. If they have had their meal in the house (the women always eat after their men have been satisfied), they return together to the field, where the wife works as hard as the husband, often even ploughing. She stays in the field till 'parrot-time' and then goes back to the house to prepare the evening meal, bathing naked on her way in a river pool. Her husband comes back at dusk, and ties up the cattle in the *bari* or in the byre; the children bring them home, calling stray animals with a kind of shrill yodelling. He then bathes naked in the men's pool, and returns for his supper and sleep.

I have not attempted to recapitulate the daily routine of the Hill Maria, most of which, including his four meals, has been detailed in the preceding pages, which have generally dealt primarily with him rather than the Bison-horn Maria.

H. Fire-Making

All Marias and most Murias make fire by means of a fire-saw.[a] A piece of bamboo about 1½ or 1¾ inches in diameter and about 16 inches long is split down the centre for about half its length, and wedged open with a pebble or a bit of stick at the split end. This 'hearth' stick is called by Hill Marias a *negho*, and is explained by them as the 'mother' of the fire. Another length of bamboo, perhaps a little longer than the 'hearth', is split in half, and one half is trimmed along the top of the split to a clean, sharp edge; this trimmed half they call the *kanda*. A flat boulder is selected and firmly planted on the ground. On top of this are placed dry leaves, or a bit of old rag, if available; and two men hold the 'hearth' down by its ends on the stone and the leaves, so that the leaves are under the V formed by the wedged split. The third man then saws

[a] [See cat. 116, p. 423.—Analyst]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

372 his *kunda* by the sharp edge between their hands across the split in the 'hearth' and at right angles to the 'hearth', rapidly increasing the speed of his sawing; this friction soon engenders smoke and a spark, which falls through the 'hearth' on to the little heap of inflammable bamboo sawdust that has fallen with the sawing on to the dead leaves or rag. Sawing is at once stopped, and the 'hearth' lifted off the sawdust with great care by the kneeling men, who gently blow on the spark till it spreads and kindles the sawdust, when they fold the leaves carefully over sawdust and sparks and take the packet off to the place where a fire is to be lit, kindling first heaps of dry grass, and with this small sticks and finally logs. They are very quick in the process. I introduced a race in the tribal sports at the Maharani Sahiba's Dasehra celebrations, in which teams of three had to run fifty yards, make fire, and run with it another fifty yards to kindle a bonfire; and Hill Maria teams invariably won; the timing of the whole process, from the start till the bonfire was well alight, was eighty-seven seconds. In the [177] Muria and some Bison-horn Maria tracts the use of matches is coming in.

There appears to be no ritual occasion on which fire has to be kindled in this way. The first pile of dry wood at the firing of the *penda* fields, and the fires for cooking sacrificial meals, are kindled [178] from a burning log brought from the Hearth of the Departed in the *kasyeq-gaita's* or *penna's* house.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Penda is not common among the Muria; it is practised only by those living in the hilly country near the Raughat and in the Abujhmar foothills of the south. *Dippa* and *parka* are the special Muria methods. They are, of course, transitional forms of cultivation from the very primitive *penda* to ordinary plough-agriculture, for they require the use of cattle.

In a *dippa* clearing the trees and bushes are cut in February after the Kare-Pandum, when Tallur Muttai is offered a hollow bamboo split down the middle, before which cutting is taboo. The wood is spread over the clearing and left to dry. For *parka*, the wood is cut elsewhere and carried to the field in a shouldered carrying-pole called *asur* or *bhârni*; it is thrown onto the ground and spread fairly evenly across the field.

Before cutting the first *parka*, the Kaser-Gaita spends the night with all the men of the village in the ghotul to ensure that none of them approach their wives who, as menstruating creatures, are always potentially dangerous. He himself cooks and eats apart. In the morning they go to the village shrine and offer sacrifice to all the deities connected with the village, especially remembering Mother Earth and the Departed, saying, 'Let the harvest be good, and let no ill befall us'.

The Gaita then cooks the head of the goat or pig that was sacrificed before the shrine, and small portions are distributed. He sends the chelik to cut the wood. As they first swing their axes they cry *Kiddari pudo*—referring to the genitals of the well-omened kiddari bird. The villagers bring burnt rice, soot from the bottom of their cooking-pots, water and gourds. When the wood has been cut the Gaita says, 'Give the chelik some food', and the villagers smear the boys' faces with soot and force a little burnt rice into their mouths.

FIG. 1. Kunj digging-stick of iron
Length 1' 7"

All are now free to cut the wood for their fields. From this point we may treat the two types of cultivation together. Indeed *dippa* often shades off into *parka*, for where there are not enough trees in a *dippa* clearing, a supplementary supply has to be cut elsewhere and brought as for *parka*.

In some villages there is a ceremonial burning of a small patch of *parka* at the time of the Wijja Pandum; I describe this in detail in Chapter XXIV. In other places, the ritual of the first firing is done at the time just before the rains. The Kaser-Gaita sleeps as usual in the ghotul and then goes with the chelik to his own field. He offers liquor to the local gods, and starts the burning with a smouldering bit of paddy rope taken from the ghotul fire.[1] The other villagers come and all light their own fires from this.

To spread the ashes evenly over the field, the Muria use a long rake called the *harlat* or *halla* (*dhosna* in Halbi). This is simply a very long pole with a board attached to the end. It is, in Muria riddle, 'the snake that wriggles all over the field'. They wear *karpunj* sandals of sambhar hide or wooden shoes called *katwah* to protect their feet from the hot ground, none the less bearable for the burning sun of the hottest time of the year. The urine turns dark and burns and for a few days the whole tribe endures a sort of urethritis. 'The town people suffer for sex, but we for our field-work', as a man at Phulpar explained.

[1] The Juang keep a fire burning night and day in their *mandagarh* dormitory, and usually ignite their clearings from it.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

But I was able to see it at Almer a few days later on 23 April. This hunt is mainly the business of the chelik directed by the Kaser-Gaita, but other and more experienced hunters join in, for success in the hunt is the best of omens, not only for a plentiful supply of wild fruit but later for a fine harvest. A crowd therefore of chelik and older men led by the Kaser-Gaita with their axes and bows and arrows, some with gourds of gruel to refresh them on the way, gathered on the path leading towards the jungle. 196

The Gaita laid his own bow and arrows and axe together with a chelik's bow and arrows and axe across the path. He made a small doll out of dub grass and a grass bow and arrow and placed these in front. He made three piles of earth and on each of these placed a ring of aonra leaf and a branch of tendu. He made fire with a fire-drill (not a saw) and lit a little incense which he offered to Tallur Muttai the Earth Mother, Mundri Dokari the wife of Budha Deo, and the Departed, crying to the earth to give good hunting. He waved the fire over the arrows, pressed his right hand hard on the ground, then carried away the grass doll and bow and arrow towards the village and threw them to the side of the path. At the same time the ghotul Sirdar picked up the bows and arrows and axes with a cry of triumph, crossed the line and went quickly down the path without looking back. [372]

That day in Almer they got nothing, but the following evening, in Bandopal, the chelik returned with a jungle-fowl and a young chital. As they cut the chital up, they removed the tip of the ears, the tongue, the hoofs and liver; these bits were done up in three leaf-packets and cooked separately. The Kaser-Gaita took these packets and offered them to the local gods; a little was left over and put aside for himself. The flesh was cooked where it was cut up—in the fields outside the village—and a little wrapped up in leaves was given to every household.

We now return to Masora for the Marka Pandum. The different clans in this village kept the festival in different places, each with their own clan-gods; I went with the Poyami people and their Anga Deo to a sacred grove near a small stream in the jungle about a mile from the village. Here we found the gods—the Anga Deo whose name was Lal Sai, the Gutal pole called Lalu, and the tall flag-staff and flag of white cloth, with sun and moon and nine little men worked on it in red which represents Budha Deo—placed in position under a saja tree. A brass horse for the Rau was under another tree, and a broken sword and shield for ancestors who had died in battle long ago. [718]

Not far from the gods the chelik had cleared and cow-dunged a patch of ground and were busy cooking rice and koera. There were baskets of mangoes, char and karmata fruit ready for the pot. In front of the gods also 'these three sisters, mango, char and karmata', had been placed.

Presently three of the chelik took their hunting-horns and blew them as a sign that the proceedings were to start. The mediums obtained leave to begin and the gods were taken up and carried to the stream. There the Gaita first offered eggs, liquor and aonra rings to the Water Maidens and took the gods down into the stream and washed them thoroughly. The Gaita crossed the stream and offered eggs and rings and liquor to the Forest Maidens for the safety of the cattle that might graze there.

After the bathing the gods were brought back and anointed with mahua oil. Then two of the Sirahs-mediums sat in trance before the gods and discussed with them in a curiously intimate and homely way what offerings were to be made and what the gods would do in return. The clan-priest took chickens that were brought for every Poyami household and two pigs and persuaded them to eat a little of the rice that was piled in small heaps before the gods.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

Plate LXXI

883.4
372

The Hikmi of Almer removes wood from the ghotul stack

[p. 350(A)]